



DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR
MICHAEL A. DAHLIG, MANAGING DIRECTOR

News Release

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Mayor Kawakami delivers 2023 State of the County Address Tuesday

LĪHU'E – Mayor Derek S.K. Kawakami delivered the 2023 State of the County Address in Līhu'e on Tuesday.

“We certainly have been through a lot as a community over these past few years. I can say our administration has never lost sight of the core mission,” said Mayor Kawakami in front of a crowd of over 150 people. “We continue to take care of what we have, and find new ways to modernize our approach to services.”

The goal of this year's budget is to shape a strong foundation for future generations.

“We are doing this by paying down our debts while avoiding additional debt service or tax increases; ensuring that the bulk of our tax burden is paid by non-residents; and tackling necessary upgrades to our aging infrastructure - large CIP projects that have been deferred for decades - all while delivering on the day-to-day county services our community expects,” said Mayor Kawakami.

Budget priorities for Fiscal Year 2024 include focusing on infrastructure and deferred maintenance – \$15.5 million of General Excise Taxes are proposed to go toward road repaving, with an added \$18.5 million in CIP-related costs to improve roads and sidewalks islandwide. A proposed new team of Ocean Safety Officers will enable a “Dawn to Dusk” ocean safety program with extended hours and coverage. In partnership with the state, Mayor announced significant upgrades planned for Vidinha Stadium, including converting the field to artificial turf and replacing the track and lighting. Additional

highlights included siting a new landfill and breaking ground on 400 new affordable housing units in 2023 – a record for Kaua‘i.

With a unique surfing theme incorporated into his speech, Mayor Kawakami – under bouts of rain throughout the morning – likened the county’s budget to a surfboard.

“Our budget is the vessel by which government is made possible. No one board is fit for every wave. It’s uniquely crafted for specific conditions, but also designed to adapt and be flexible,” said Mayor Kawakami. “Similarly, this year’s budget is shaped for our current and unique environment as we navigate the shifting tides of a post-COVID economy. Our goal for this year’s budget was to utilize our unique position to help shape our government, our island, our families, and in doing so, shape the future of the County of Kaua‘i.”

“With your partnership, we will shape the future of Kaua‘i, one that makes the next generation proud,” added Mayor Kawakami. “We will raise our children to believe that if we can ride on water, we can do anything. We are proud of the strong state of our county, and we look forward to what’s to come.”

To view Mayor Kawakami’s State of the County, visit [Kauai.gov](https://www.kauai.gov) or click on the link here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIFRpKA8RjQ>.



Photo caption: Mayor Derek S.K. Kawakami delivers his 2023 State of the County Address on Tuesday, prioritizing the community's needs, Kaua'i's families, government, and future.



Photo caption: Kauai Council Members (from left to right) Bernard Carvalho Jr., Ross Kagawa, Felicia Cowden, Addison Bulosan, Council Vice Chair KipuKai Kualii, and Council Chair Mel Rapozo attend the 2023 State of the County on Tuesday.



Photo caption: On Tuesday, Mayor Derek S.K. Kawakami (right) delivers his 2023 State of the County at the Lihu'e Civic Center



Photo caption: Mayor Derek S.K. Kawakami (left) is joined by Maui County Mayor Richard T. Bissen Jr. on Tuesday.

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